

## • **Responding to papers: what to look for**

This is a suggested list of things to consider when you read a peer's paper. I often use this list to reference as I comment on and grade drafts. Always consider the larger elements such as content, structure and thesis before considering style and mechanics. If there are significant problems with the larger elements, much of the paper will be revised and problems with style and mechanics may disappear in revised drafts.

### **Thesis**

- Is there one? Does this type of paper need one?
- If there is a thesis, is it clear and focused?
- Does the thesis connect the topic and purpose of the paper? Do you understand what the writer is trying to say about the particular topic?
- Does the thesis match the body of the paper or does the paper stray from the focus of the thesis?

### **Structure**

- Does the paper flow well when you read it? Do you have to stop and start reading again?
- Is the structure of the paper clear and logical? Are you ever lost?
- Are there enough transitions between ideas? Do you understand how different ideas/sections of the paper are connected?
- Do the paragraphs move from general to specific ideas?
- Are there any paragraphs that seem out of place?

### **Content**

- Has the writer completely and accurately followed the assignment?
- Does the writer stray from the thesis of the essay and start talking about something else?
- Has the writer included clear, relevant examples to support all of their assertions? Are there any sections of the paper that could use more examples or more explanation, places where you needed to hear more?
- Are there places where you want to hear less, where it's getting repetitive or dull?
- Has the writer include quotes, if applicable, to support their examples?
- Does the writer quote too much?
- Does the writer acknowledge when information they presented is from another source?

### **Style**

- What is the writer's tone? Does their tone fit the audience and purpose of the paper?
- Are there any wordy or awkward sentences that just don't sound right?
- Are there several short, choppy sentences in a row that could be combined?
- Do the sentences vary in length and structure throughout the paper?
- Is the writer's language precise and accurate?
- Does the writer use any jargon or clichés (ex: "In today's society...")

### **Mechanics**

- Are there any spelling or punctuation errors?
- Do you see any problems with MLA (or APA) formatting, documentation, punctuation of quotes, or the Works Cited page
- Are there any grammatical errors?
- Some common mistakes to keep an eye out for: fragments, run-ons, comma splices, dropped quotes, verb-tense agreement.